SCRIPT BITS!
Issue: Sonic the Hedgehog #165 (AUG'06)
Pages:

Welcome one and all to **Script Bits!** This monthly feature will take roughly forty-five percent of a story in Archie Comic's *Sonic the Hedgehog* and present it to you as insight into the writing process.

Part of the fun of this feature will be comparing what was written and what saw print. Sometimes the vision is tweaked as the artists interpret the script. Sometimes the original idea doesn't work once put on paper and must be adjusted from there. Sometimes the artist has a stroke of genius and does something different than what the script calls for - and it's for the better!

So pull out your copy of *Sonic the Hedgehog* #165 from August of 2006 and get ready to read along!

Remembering "Leak"

"Leak" began as a very different story initially. It was originally meant to be a two-part story with the main plot following Sonic and Fiona as they went into the Badlands and disabled the nuclear missiles. Tails and Knuckles, meanwhile, took part in a subplot that was later turned into part of StH#170.

Sonic and Fiona would confront the Destructix and Issac, learning from the latter what we ultimately learned from Rouge in the final version – Issac has a screw loose, Ivan Kinotbor is a corpse-sicle, and Dr. Finitevus is mysterious and dangerous. The question of Fiona's fidelity would also be raised during a confrontation with Scourge.

Things were greatly restructured to give more attention to the elements that needed it and to make things a little more interesting. Sonic and Fiona leaping among warheads – while cool – was the kind of standard action the comic is known for. To shake things up a little we went with the detective/mystery angle. It also allowed for Rouge's escape from their ranks easier to explain.

One of the big elements of "Leak" was to gently undo some of the knots created during "The Good, The Bad and the Unknown" arc (StH#146-149), chief among them the Chaos Emeralds. Irradiate beryl neutered the mystique of the magical stones. It also threw a bit of a wrench into my plans for "Order from Chaos" (StH#168-169). The path of least resistance would be to say the twelve-thousand-plus year old robot had lost its proverbial marbles.

This also left a bit of a loop-hole for those who greatly enjoyed "GBU" and wanted to adhere to Issac's explanation. It was possible for Rouge to be mistaken and Issac was completely lucid before Dr. Finitevus began tinkering with it. I've since been working under the assumption Issac is looney tunes, though.

Another plot point that needed immediate attention was the matter of the Destructix. They were at the mercy of Dr. Eggman and under the dubious protection of an equally captured Mammoth Mogul.

I love the Destructix and, while they do get the tar beaten out of them, I've always wanted to make something more of them. This will be a long, long process. Part of it was a change in management which we got with Dr. Finitevus's rescue of them.

This moment also marked the demise of six other characters: the orphans of Uma Arachnis. As cool as spider ninjas are, there wasn't much we could do with them. It was a gimmick six times over in an already large team. So the nameless, characterless ninjas got the axe.

This issue also finally had the rematch between Sonic and Scourge. The trick with Scourge in any confrontation with Sonic is to make him a worthy adversary. If Sonic beats him with ease we're back to the lame Evil Sonic we've worked so hard to leave behind. If Scourge reigns supreme he runs the risk of being a "twink" – a role-playing term for those who cast themselves as unbeatable or played with an unfair advantage.

To make the fight a little more believable, Sonic is set off-balance: Tails is at gun-point and Scourge blind-sides him. It's with this advantage that we can accept Scourge has the upper hand at first. After the sequence where Scourge surfs on Sonic down the tree (gorgeously rendered by Tracy Yardley!) Sonic turns the tables. We are equalized and got a fun battle sequence that incorporated Sonic/Scourge's speed and agility rather than your usual fistcuffs.

Then we have the love-triangle that had to happen. Rouge the Bat, stealer of hearts and other precious things, sets her eyes upon Julie-Su's most precious of possessions – Knuckles' affection. The fun of this was that the characters are very much alike; capable, powerful, self-confident, resourceful, and with a questionable background. Granted, Julie-Su has since moved on from her Dark Legion days, but it still casts a long shadow behind her. And Rouge is plain fun to write as the "bad girl."

Part of the fun of this love triangle (for me) isn't the question of who will win Knuckles' heart in the end, but just how oblivious Knuckles will be as he's fought over.

Sadly I couldn't honor all of the requests for selections this month. I did get a little of everyone's requests though! We have Rouge's report to the Chaotix as well as her confrontation with Julie-Su. We also have the meat of the Sonic and Scourge battle.

PAGE FIVE

Panel 1 - ROUGE sits at panel's left, arms crossed and looking away/down as she confesses. The rest of the panel fades into a flashback scene. SCENE: ROUGE and SCOURGE appear before DR. FINITEVUS (see S#161).

ROUGE
Scourge and I escaped via warp ring.
It was sent by a madman named Dr. Finitevus.
He wanted our help in return for the rescue.*

EDITOR'S NOTE
See S#161

Panel 2 - Flashback. The Egg Grape Chamber (see S#141). Six small warp rings hover in front of each ball in a bunch of EGG GRAPES. Each of the DESTRUCTIX climbs out through a ring. We don't have to see all of them, just some identifying body parts. We *MUST* clearly see SLEUTH DAWG so we can

identify him later in the story. We can see the silhouettes of ROUGE, SCOURGE and FINITEVUS to one side. There's also a bunch of EGG GRAPES that have small, shadowy bodies in them. These are the SPIDER KIDS. If you're cramped for space, cut their bit out.

TEXT BOX (light violet - Rouge)
We helped him break into Robotnik's Egg Vineyard.
It turns out he had alot of your enemies captured.
Half of them were already dead.
Dr. Finitevus rescued what was left of the Destructix.
They joined us since their master, Mammoth Mogul, had deserted them

Panel 3 - Flackback. FINITEVUS tinkers in an open access panel of ISSAC's head (see S#146-149). In the background, we should see a room-sized tube covered in frost. Just barely visible is the body of a human scientist (see S#149)

TEXT BOX (light violet - Rouge)
Finitevus brought us back to a base guarded by some ancient robot called **Issac.**
He wanted to steal all of Issac's data, but most of it was corrupt or erroneous.
I mean, it was guarding a frozen corpse.
Can a robot go insane?

Panel 4 - We're very close behind ROUGE as she looks over dozens of missiles in an underground cavern (see S#148-149 for reference)

TEXT B OX (light violet - Rouge)
Anyway, Finitevus was looking to control dozens of ancient missiles.
When I found out his plan
I ruined all of them.
He didn't like that.

<u>PAGE EIGHT</u>

Panel 1 - SLEUTH and FIONA turn back to each other, all scowls. TAILS looks away, ashamedly for being bartered over by his heart's desire.

FIONA
You can let go of the **kid.**
What do you want?

SLEUTH
I'm here for a traitor and something she stole.

Panel 2 - We swing around to their other side so we can see the valley clearing at the base of Freedom HQ. We see the blue and green streaks of SONIC and SCOURGE's running battle in the distance, which zig-zag, ties themselves into a

nuclear-symbol “knot” and then straighten back into the forest. NOTE: the "knot" is supposed to be the two of them homing-attacking each other at a furious pace, ala the games. FIONA and SLEUTH continue to stare each other down as TAILS looks hopefully at the distant struggle.

FIONA
This coming from the guy who sold the Freedom Fighters out to Robotnik.*

SLEUTH
I’m sure Sonic told you all sorts of things.
But did you tell him . . .

EDITOR’S NOTE
*See the classic S#42

Panel 3 - Extreme close-up on SLEUTH’s face as he smiles wickedly. Underplay the look as much as you can. SLEUTH isn’t as flamboyantly evil as our other rogues.

SLEUTH
. . . why it’s so ironic you call **me** traitor?

PAGE NINE

Panel 1 - Tall panel that runs up the side of the page. We see the length of a tall pine tree. The colored streaks of SONIC and SCOURGE wrap around it like a screw bit.

Panel 2 - Top third of the remainder of the page. SONIC grabs the top of the tree, swings around, and kicks SCOURGE.

SONIC
Not that I’m don't enjoy kicking your butt
But what’s the occasion, Scourge?

Panel 3 - Middle third of the remainder of the page. SCOURGE lands on the top of another pine, his weight bending it back. He scrunches down, arms out, ready to leap from it. He smirks.

SCOURGE
First - A little revenge . . .

Panel 4 - Bottom third of the remainder of the page. SONIC recoils towards us as SCOURGE springs forward from the tree, punching him. SCOURGE strikes the “Superman pose” as he hurtles towards us. The tree he leapt from bends in its counter-swing.

SCOURGE

. . . now that you don't have a Shadow to hide behind!

PAGE TEN

Panel 1 - SCOURGE kneels upon SONIC and rides him like a surfboard down the tree. Branches shred and splinter around SONIC's head as they descend.

SCOURGE
Second - I wanted to see my girlfriend again.

Panel 2 - Extreme close-up of SONIC and SCOURGE's faces, the former with an expression of shocked anger; the latter with a smug look of villainous victory.

SCOURGE
I love how she plays it like you two are for real.

Panel 3 - At the base of the tree, SONIC goes into a spin, which reduces him to a ball. SCOURGE gets shot off into another near-by tree. Show an impact-flash around the top bit of SONIC's spin to show that's what sent SCOURGE flying.

SONIC (large text)
LIAR!

Panel 4 - SONIC hoists SCOURGE up by the jacket collar. SCOURGE hangs limply, his shades askew, but gives our hero the same wide, wicked smile. SONIC, free fist raised, returns a muted look of anger.

SCOURGE
You got a lousy track record with the ladies, Blue.

SONIC
No worse than your fight record, Green.

FIONA (from off-panel)
Sonic!

Panel 5 - The hedgehogs look over find SLEUTH, TAILS and FIONA. FIONA has her hands on TAILS' shoulders. SLEUTH holds his blaster by his side, but isn't threatening with it.

FIONA
It's over.
We made a deal.

PAGE THIRTEEN

Panel 1 - The chamber from the beginning of the story. VECTOR and KNUCKLES leave the room, unhappy. ROUGE is very attentive to KNUCKLES as he leaves, giving him an appraising look.

TEXT BOX (blue - Sonic)
. . . I want to know what the Chaotix found out.

KNUCKLES
That was a waste of time.

VECTOR
Chill, Knux.
At least we got some info on Finitevus.

Panel 2 - ROUGE goes wide-eyed as JULIE-SU kicks the chair out from under her. ROUGE stumbles but holds in place in the air with her wings.

SFX (kicking the chair)
WHAM

Panel 3 - JULIE-SU grabs ROUGE up by the upper-arm. She's *livid,* but ROUGE returns a muted, contemptuous smirk.

JULIE-SU
Listen up, Rouge.
I see you eyeing Knuckles.

Panel 4 - We sit on ROUGE's shoulder and look with her at the very dangerous looking JULIE-SU. Leave lots of space for ranting. The single, overhead light source gives us dramatic shadows.

JULIE-SU
He's the only person to make me feel like something other than a soldier.
He is my soulmate and my equal.
But if you try to take away someone that **precious** to me
I'll show you how good a soldier I can be!

Panel 5 - ROUGE reverses the situation and takes JULIE-SU by the wrists, holding JULIE-SU's hands above her head. ROUGE slams JULIE-SU to the wall behind her. JULIE-SU is wide-eyed in surprise. ROUGE smiles darkly.

ROUGE
Cute.

Panel 1 - Reverse of PG13-PN4: We look on from JULIE-SU's shoulder at ROUGE. Leave room for ranting.

ROUGE
Listen up, sweetie.
I specialize in stealing **precious** things.
Sometimes for others, but mostly for me.
And I've never gone empty-handed.

Panel 2 - The girls get face-to-face. JULIE-SU is enraged and, in a way, afraid - for being so easily disarmed and for what ROUGE is saying. ROUGE's look "softens" to one of cruel superiority.

ROUGE
You're welcome to try to stop me.
After all, if he's so true to you, you have nothing to fear.
Right?

JULIE-SU
Let me go you b- -

Panel 3 - ROUGE throws a knee into JULIE-SU's midsection, doubling the echidna over.

ROUGE
Bat.
Remember it.

Panel 4 - ROUGE stands at the door to the room, the light from the hall flooding the room with light. We stand with her in the doorway, looking into the room. JULIE-SU holds her middle and props herself up on the back of the chair, *glowering* at ROUGE.

JULIE-SU
I will.

ROUGE
I look forward to our next visit, Julie-Su.

Panel 5 - Same general layout as last panel, only ROUGE pulls the door to so that we can't see JULIE-SU anymore. ROUGE smiles in confident wickedness.

TEXT BOX
End

Remembering "Call of Duty"

This story really didn't change too much through the revision process. The only noticeable change was they Snively was originally shown among the Brian Trust since – at the time – "Ties that Bind" was scheduled to run later. Circumstances changed the run order and we now had a small continuity hiccup. Steve Butler (penciler) and Jim Amash (inker) were instructed to simply draw Snively out of the scene. Problem solved.

A big part of this story was to follow-up on "Return to Angel Island" (StH#138-141) and to set things up for the future. This included the split within the Dark Legion and the shaken – but not ousted – power of the Dingo Regime.

The real meat and potatoes of the story is the show-down between Knuckles and Locke. It's heartbreaking to see what has become of the two. Knuckles lost his adored father at a very early age and carried that pristine image with him until he learned the truth. The truth, disturbingly enough, was that the abandonment was ritualistic and that Locke had gone to great lengths to control Knuckles' direction in life. The beautiful façade has begun to crumble, and Knuckles turns to anger to hide the devastation and panic he feels.

We're also witnessing the tail-end of Locke's steady descent that began so very long ago. Does the blame lie with his upbringing? Is he another victim of the skewed Brotherhood's traditions? Or is that just an excuse for him? The abandonment alone would be enough to raise questions of his character. His relationship with Lara-Le was another warning flag, as well as initially running from Knuckles in KtE#25. He's certainly had his moments where it appears he wants to buck tradition and act rationally, but all of that is eclipsed with his fiddling of his own genes and irradiating Knuckles' egg with Chaos Energy. Totally inexcusable.

It gets worse. Even with the power of the Chaos Force to call upon, Locke went into a bare-chested brawl in the Mysterious Cat Country during the Sonic Adventure arc. (StH#84). He named his child after the Knuckles Tribe, a group he researched, and would have known full-well of their bloody history. And when Echidnaopolis fell to Dr. Eggman, Locke eased right back into the tribal roots appearing disturbingly like Pachamac. The signs were all there, and I took the next step forward.

Would Locke knowingly let his people come to harm? I think it's questionable at this point. The Brotherhood – his foundation, his family, his world – has been violently removed. He has nothing to fall back on whereas Knuckles has the Chaotix and Knothole. When someone of such a questionable rationality is put into such extremes, they're bound to snap. This is even more disturbing when we stop to think about just how powerful Locke is.

While Locke's dark path is easy enough to justify, having Knuckles deny Angel Island was a tougher egg to crack. He loves his people, his island, and his title. Despite his growing conflict with his father, a lot of what Locke is saying would normally ring true to Knuckles. The answer lay very early on in the "Super Sonic vs. Hyper Knuckles" special. There was my answer.

Locke himself taught Knuckles to not approach the problem head-on, but to think about it and approach it laterally. Yes, there are problems on Angel Island, but they all can be traced to a source. The Eggman Empire would come crashing back like a wave once Angel Island was liberated rendering all the efforts of our heroes moot. In my mind,

Knuckles made the right decision. The problem will be dealing with the repercussions of that decision. And that's what we have future issues for!

I couldn't get every page requested for this story either but I did get the climax between Knuckles and Locke, its fallout, as well as the scene with the much-speculated-over Frost Legion Grandmaster. To stave off the spoilers, though, I've cut a bit from that page. Enjoy the continuing mystery, folks!

PAGE THREE

PANEL ONE - We get a full view of the screen. KNUCKLES's head can be seen, almost put into silhouette by the light of the screen. LOCKE looks down upon like a Greek god would upon a mortal. Beside LOCKE's head, we see a wavering still image of the ECHIDNAS in their tribal dress. The rustic village ECHIDNAOPOLIS is in ruins with a few small fires. The ECHIDNAS look miserable.

LOCKE
I **know** you must return to Angel Island because your people are suffering.

KNUCKLES
Why? I thought they were rebuilding Echidnaopolis?*

EDITORIAL NOTE
*see S#150

PANEL TWO - Similar layout to the previous panel. A still image appears on the other side of LOCKE's head. In it we see GENERAL KAGE and DINGO SOLDIERS. KAGE smiles villainously and raises his roboticized hand, which is enveloped in a halo of crackling energy. The DINGOES heft firearms that should resembles guns just enough to let us know they're armed with projectile weapons. We don't want anything photorealistic here. See S#140 for references.

LOCKE
Have you forgotten General Kage and his army?
You all dealt them a small blow last time you bothered to return**
But they're still a constant threat.

KNUCKLES
What about the Dark Legion?
I thought they were helping to fight them!

EDITORIAL NOTE
**see S#141

PANEL THREE - Similar layout again. LOCKE grimaces in a look of distaste. Two images hover on either side of his head now.

On the left, we see LIEN-DA scowling and clutching her whip. Behind her are numerous FLAME LEGIONARIES - the robed Dark Legionaries carrying flaming swords.

On the right, we see the shadowy form of what looks like KRAGOK, but we get a glimpse of a lock of black hair coming from under the hood, which will reveal to the astute reader it is really [--EDITED FOR SCRIPT BITS--]. Behind him are a line of FROST LEGIONARIES - the Dark Legionaries with ice-hoses and back-packs.

<u>References</u>
Lien-Da / Flame & Frost Legion - S#139-141
Kragok (to base [--EDITED FOR SCRIPT BITS--] upon, but not copy) - K#1 (regular series)
[--EDITED FOR SCRIPT BITS--]. (for the hair) - K#[--EDITED FOR SCRIPT BITS--]

LOCKE
The Dark Legion caught in their own civil war.

KNUCKLES
WHAT?!

LOCKE
Lien-Da commands the Flame Legion
While an unknown echidna is now Grandmaster of the Frost Legion.

<u>PAGE SIX</u>

PANEL ONE - LOCKE roars on the screen. KNUCKLES leans in, a ferocious smile on his face as he challenges his father.

LOCKE
So you plan on just staying down there righting wrongs . . .

KNUCKLES
Just like the Brotherhood was doing for years?
Yes, I am!

PANEL TWO - Triangular panel. Long and narrow, like the top slice of a panel. The top edge should overlap the very bottom of PANEL ONE. We see KNUCKLES' triumphant, challenging glare/smile. Heavy highlights, giving him a glowing, positive look.

PANEL THREE - Triangular panel. This runs counter the previous panel. It's bottom edge should overlap the top of PANEL FOUR. We see LOCKE (full colors -

in HAVEN II) glowering, furious. Stark lighting and shadows to give him a terrible look.

PANEL FOUR - LOCKE's eyes narrow into a menacing, piercing look. We are seeing the real him, not through the monitor.

LOCKE
You have to come back, Knuckles.
I cannot guarantee the safety of your mother or her family.

PANEL FOUR - Small, square panel that is 1-of-3 in a series. KNUCKLES goes wide-eyed, mouth agape in horror. His father pretty much just threatened to let Lara-Le die.

KNUCKLES (small text, slightly larger-than-needed balloon)
You . . .

PANEL FIVE - Small, square panel that is 2-of-3 in a series. KNUCKLES' face begins to contort into a glower. His fist rises, trembling.

KNUCKLES (usual font size, thick border for the balloon)
. . . **did** . . .

PANEL SIX - Small, square panel that is 3-of-3 in the series. KNUCKLES is in full-on rage. He screams, beginning to throw a punch.

KNUCKLES (larger font, ragged on the ends, with a burst balloon)
. . . **NOT** . . .**!!!**

<u>PAGE SEVEN</u>

PANEL ONE - KNUCKLES punches the screen, which explodes in a shower of glass shards and sparks. We can just glimpse LOCKE's shocked expression as his face is destroyed. Huge, flashy moment.

SFX (arching over the shattering screen)
KKZRAAAAASH!

PANEL TWO - KNUCKLES stands, fists held low but ready, teeth bared. He looks like an snarling animal. Buds of tears stand at the corner of his eyes, though. Behind him, we get all of the BRAIN TRUST - ROTOR, TOMMY, TAILS, UNCLE

CHUCK and SNIVELY. They all look over, wide-eyed and afraid. The green-tinted light is gone.

KNUCKLES (small font, wavering tail from the bubbles)
. . . you didn't . . .
. . . just say that . . .
. . . you wouldn't . . .
. . . let her get . . .

PANEL THREE - ROTOR tries to put a supportive hand on KNUCKLES' shoulder, but KNUCKLES roughly rolls his shoulder out of his grip.

ROTOR
Knuckles . . .

KNUCKLES
I'm fine!
I . . I just . . .

PANEL FOUR - He looks sadly at the screen. TOMMY gives him a weak, supportive smile. SNIVELY can be seen in the background, giving KNUCKLES a dirty, disapproving look.

KNUCKLES
I'm sorry about your screen.

TOMMY (wavering tail from the balloon)
Uh . . don't worry about it . . .
I-I'll fix it . . .

KNUCKLES
Thanks, Tommy.

PANEL FIVE - KNUCKLES starts to leave the room. TAILS catches up to him. Even though they take up the doorway, we can see the other BRAIN TRUST members cleaning up - if you can squeeze it in there.

TAILS
Knuckles!
Hold on a second!

KNUCKLES
Not now, Tails.

PAGE EIGHT

PANEL ONE - TAILS spins his tails and flies in front of KNUCKLES, smiling kindly. KNUCKLES frowns sadly, but stops in his tracks.

TAILS
What you did was right
Maybe not punching the screen (small text - an aside)
But we need you here.

PANEL TWO - TAILS lands next to KNUCKLES, smiling hopefully. KNUCKLES allows a small smile of his own.

TAILS
You've made all of Mobius your island to protect.
I'm sure your dad will see that eventually.

KNUCKLES
Yeah . . . maybe.
Thanks, Tails.

PANEL THREE - TAILS takes flight again, giving KNUCKLES a worried look over his shoulder as he heads back into the other room. KNUCKLES clasps his hands behind his back and walks away glumly.

KNUCKLES
I . . . I'm going to talk to Julie-Su.

TAILS
Alright.
Take it easy, Knuckles.

PANEL FOUR - Extreme close-up, side-long view of KNUCKLES' head as he looks upwards. The back of his head fades to sky and ANGEL ISLAND.

KNUCKLES (thought balloon)
I will return to Angel Island, dad . . .
. . . one day.

PANEL FIVE - HAVEN II. The cavern has gone darker as the MASTER EMERALD glows less intensely. We see the shadowy form of LOCKE, still in a lotus position, sitting on the ground. We cannot fully read his body language, but we should get a foreboding feeling.

TEXT BOX
The End